

Manitoba



Justice

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News Release

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2005 LAW ENFORCEMENT REVIEW AGENCY ANNUAL REPORT RELEASED

The annual report of the independent agency responsible for handling public complaints about the province's 14 municipal police agencies has been released.

The Law Enforcement Review Agency (LERA) does not investigate criminal matters, but focuses on the way officers conduct themselves on duty. Complaints include allegations of abuse of authority, arrest without reasonable or probable grounds, using unnecessary or excessive force, using oppressive or abusive conduct or language and being discourteous or uncivil.

In 2005, a total of 251 formal complaints were filed with LERA, virtually unchanged from the number of complaints filed in 2004.

The number of new investigations combined with ongoing files meant the agency worked on a total of 532 investigations. That represented the highest case load the agency has experienced to date. A total of 217 investigations were completed, which remained consistent with the number of files completed the year before. The average length of time to complete an investigation decreased from 13 months to 12 months.

In cases where complainants alleged there had been criminal misconduct, LERA investigators let them know they could also file a complaint with the police force involved. Last year there were 27 such cases. While police investigations are underway, LERA investigations must be kept on hold. The result is a delay in the length of time taken to complete LERA investigations. Concerns about the length of time it takes to complete such investigations have been expressed by LERA to the police.

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The LERA commissioner also advised police agencies to ensure line officers are made more aware of their obligations to help members of the public file complaints, and the police responded by providing further direction to officers.

Four cases were resolved through an informal process. Fifteen cases where an informal resolution was not possible and there was evidence supporting the complaint were referred to a provincial judge for a hearing.

The complete report and other information about LERA is posted on the agency's website at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/justice/lera>.

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